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Record and Chronicle

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THE HOSPITAL FOR SPECIAL SURGERY
for Dispensing the Family Gossip to our Members with the Armed Forces

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The following is contributed to our special feature column by Dr. David Gillespie:

Sometimes it is good to recall the old days, to "go a-visitin' back to Grigsbys Station, where we were so happy and so pore" - as Whitcomb Riley says. Maybe your Editor had this in mind when he asked this reporter to write something about the days at the Old Hospital. That was a queer old place, standing on the northwest corner of 42nd St. & Lexington Ave. where the mighty Commodore Hotel now raises its head twenty odd stories into the skies. Its architecture was mid-Victorian, set back from 42nd St. some thirty feet and fenced off from the roving herds of cattle (sic) on 42nd St. by an elaborate iron fence. It was three stories high and dark and gloomy within, though its wards were large, light and airy. On the roof was a large playroom open in summer but which could be closed in in winter. In the early days there was no operating room as there was no operating, and the wards accommodated only children. The treatment of these patients was entirely mechanical, with trusses, braces and splints. Later various exercises were added as part of the therapeutic measures. About 1896 a new six story building was erected on the southwest corner of 43rd St. & Lexington Ave. and space provided for adult wards. The clinic was moved to the ground floor of this building. When your reporter came into the picture, Dr. Virgil P. Gibney was Surgeon-in-Chief and Dr. Wm. T. Bull was at the head of the Hernia Dept. which was divided into two divisions with Dr. Wm. B. Coley as Chief of the 1st and Dr. John B. Walker as Chief of the 2nd. This service had only recently been set up when operations for hernia had come into vogue through the influence of Dr. Bull. At first the patients were all children, and the prevailing method of retaining the dressing was to apply a Plaster of Paris Spica over the dressing. This seems a far cry from our very simple dressings of today. The universal adoption of the Bassini's technique with its splendid healing and good after results was largely responsible for the steady growth of this department. On the death of Dr. Jas. Knight who had founded the hospital in 1863 and who had served as its Surgeon-in-Chief, Dr. Virgil P. Gibney was appointed Surgeon-in-Chief. Dr. Knight was of the non-operative school and Dr. Gibney while believing thoroughly in mechano-therapy, yet felt and strongly preached the frequent necessity for operative treatment. The result was that from 1888 the hospital ceased to be a home for incurable cripples and became an active operative institution

In those old days the Hernia Dept. did its operations Friday mornings - each division running its own table and it was not at all uncommon to run off three or four cases on each table in a morning's work. There were no adults except for an occasional one who might be admitted to one of the few private rooms on the second floor of the old original building, and these were usually of the female sex. Very rarely was an adult male seen in the operative service. The first adult operated on in the Hernia Dept. was a woman with a left femoral hernia and the operation was performed by Dr. W. T. Bull on March 13, 1903. During the ensuing year, fourteen

adult females were operated on - they comprised 6 inguinals, 6 femorals, 1 ventral and 1 umbilical. The adult male had no chance in the Old Hospital and it wasn't until the new hospital had been in operation two years that an adult male ward was opened.

The Hernia Clinic, as established in the new building on the corner of 43rd St. & Lexington Ave., had its Surgeons' main office looking out across 43rd St. at the old Lexington Ave. Temporary Terminal, which was the old Grand Central Palace whose ground floor was taken over for a depot while the new Grand Central Terminal was building (1907-1912). The now flourishing Hernia Club was formed in that room and I must confess that a great amount of time was spent watching the crowds pour out of the depot. The window sills were about 18" deep and afforded splendid grand stand seats from which to watch the crowds. I can well remember sitting on this window seat one day watching the crowds, when in walked Dr. Bull. He took in the situation at once and drily remarked, "When I used to work in this Clinic there was always enough to do to keep me busy all the session". Needless to say your reporter quickly descended from his perch and busied himself with statistics. Dr. Bull was a remarkable man and a fine man to work with - kindly in the extreme, painstaking but yet bold in his surgery, never seeming to hurry but never making unnecessary moves - a great teacher - a great surgeon - a great man.

Working with Dr. Wm. B. Coley was an intense and affectionate experience. I have never known a man who seemed to take such a deep personal interest in his assistants - he was more like a father than a surgical Chief. His surgical technique was rapid, careful and exact and his powers of diagnosis were the admiration of us all. Although I never worked much with Dr. John B. Walker, the Chief of the 2nd Division, yet I picked up as an observer, many valuable points in exactness of surgical technique, for he was the essence of carefulness. The appointment of Dr. Wm. A. Downes as Chief of Clinic gave me great satisfaction for here was a man who had taught me the practical art of surgery from my first days as interne at the General Memorial Hospital where he was assistant to Dr. Coley. To resume this relationship was a source of great pleasure to me. Dr. Downes in his prime was about the best all around surgeon and one of the best teachers under whom it was my pleasure and duty to serve. The appointment in 1909 of my old friend and pal Dr. Carl G. Burdick to the 1st Division of the Hernia Dept. made my happiness complete and the atmosphere of congeniality, keen rivalry and hard work was a great inspiration to harder and harder work as the activities of the hospital expanded and the operative work in the Hernia Dept. increased. We were one large happy family.

As the figures of these surgical giants pass in review before my mind as I sit and think of those old days and as they mingle with the great and kindly pioneer in Orthopaedic Surgery - Dr. Virgil P. Gibney, and with Dr. Royal Whitman, the great student and teacher of the new Orthopaedic technique, I often feel that these men have set a standard so high that our efforts of today fall far short of reaching them. I wonder!

David Gillespie

Dr. K. G. Hansson has received a letter dated Nov. 13th from Lt. Frances Dunlop who is somewhere in the Mediterranean area. She gives an interesting account of some of the results of physical therapy on the wounded. She was promoted to a 1st Lt. in August. The Record and Chronicle congratulates you Lt. Dunlop on your promotion. She sends her holiday greetings and best wishes to everyone in the hospital.

Dr. Wilson received a letter from Capt. Homer Pheasant, dated Nov. 22nd from New Orleans, La. Capt. Pheasant gives a very interesting account of the orthopaedic cases seen and treated while at Ft. Monmouth. He states that Miss Helen Brussel, a graduate of the Physical Therapy School here at Special Surgery was his Physical Therapy Aide and he speaks very enthusiastically of her "untiring and capable efforts". We quote as follows: "I had been Chief of the service for 8 months when orders came sending me here where I am now in charge of a 50 bed hospital. We have completed our training and are a little overdue on leaving, but anticipate it will not be long. Needless to say, my work now is tactical and administrative, but I do not begrudge this for my 2½ years at Ft. Monmouth, packed as tightly as they were with orthopaedics leaves me with a considerable margin for the future. It is anticipated that when we are set up in a theater of operations and are caring for patients that I can again do orthopaedics and surgery ..... If it were not for the Record and Chronicle and the information it brings me every month, I would be considerably out of touch with the family gossip, and I mean just that when I say Family - for the Hospital for Special Surgery was much more personal to me than any hospital I had previously or since encountered". He adds that his family is now in California and are well established close to his parents in Hollywood. Since receiving this letter an A.P.O. address has been received from Capt. Pheasant, % Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal.

Major B. F. Griffith (Orthopaedic Resident in 1925) writes that he has been located for somewhat more than a year at the Station Hospital, Ft. Storey, Va.

The Editor has received a V-mail letter from Comm. A.A. Knapp whose address is Base Hospital #4, Navy V 33, F.P.O., San Francisco, Cal. He writes, "Your R. & C. is always read through with great pleasure even though it takes about 8 weeks to arrive, sometimes a little less. Down here at the other end of the earth, we are in the middle of spring. The only difference between winter and spring is that we now have a little less rain. This hospital is a good size one, is staffed by men well trained in their specialties. The mortality rate of this and other hospitals in this area is remarkably low. It is my impression that the orthopaedic and surgical services are quite good, though, I have learned a little about splint patellar operations. My work has been interesting and confined to my specialty, fortunately - since I've been in the Navy - until recently when I was appointed Asst. Executive Officer. Kindest regards to the Staff".

The Editor has received a letter from Mrs. Boyd Burkhardt. She writes, "It is with great pleasure that I read the December 1st issue of the R. & C. which was addressed to my husband as a member of the Alumni. Whether or not having served as a surgical nurse with Miss Holihan in '31 and '32 makes me eligible for membership I don't know, but I fully enjoyed reading the news and picking out a few familiar names". She writes, "Boyd has been in the service since July '42, and has been doing surgery with a Field Hospital in the Aleutians for the past 8 months. His address is: Major Boyd A. Burkhardt 0-1684753, 14th Field Hospital, A.P.O. 726, % Postmaster, Seattle, Washington." Major Burkhardt was a Surgical Resident in '31 and '32.

Olive Fischer has received a Christmas card from Mrs. Lowell Thomas. On it she has written, "Lowell is still over there in the land of the Harem and whirling dervishes, gets the R. & C. regularly and devours every word of it". She asks for some word of Bill Hudspeth and Homer Pheasant. We have given the most recent news of Homer Pheasant, but are sorry to report that we don't have any news or any address for Bill Hudspeth. If anyone has any information, will they please send it to the Missing Persons Bureau, % The Editor of the R. & C.

Dr. Beekman has received a letter from Lt. Col. Jack Sullivan. This is the first word that we have had that Jack has been promoted. The Record and Chronicle congratulates Lt. Col. Sullivan on his promotion. He states that he is "still fighting the war in the same place". He is now very much interested in starting one of the 8 convalescent camps which some of you may have read about in Time. This has made additional administrative problems as Lt. Col. Sullivan is still connected with the Second Air Force. Lt. Col. and Mrs. Sullivan are now living on the post in a house which is "big and fairly empty". He adds, "We certainly would like to have some of our furniture here as G.I. mattresses, springs and beds are not the most comfortable variety". Recently he was one of the hosts to a number of orthopaedists from the northwest, Ground Forces, Air Forces, and Navy. Col. Shands, the Air Force Orthopaedic Consultant, came, and Jack says they discussed everything from policy to fractured toes.

A change of address has been received from Comm. J.J. Hayes, Surgical Resident in 1930, who writes on stationery from the Office of Naval Officer Procurement, 33 Pine St., New York City, and signs himself as Senior Medical Officer.

Over the last few months a number of changes in personnel have taken place at the hospital. Mr. Dale McMullin was recently appointed Comptroller to fill the position left vacant by the resignation of Miss Ann MacIsaac as Chief Clerk. Mr. Harry Rashmajian was appointed Chief Pharmacist to fill the position left vacant by the resignation of Miss Folcarelli. Mrs. Ida Duggan, Ward Admitting Clerk, has resigned, and will be leaving about January 1st to spend the winter in Florida. We are sorry to see Mrs. Duggan go and sincerely hope that she will find Florida much to her liking. No one has been selected yet for her place.

Dr. Jerome Lawrence, Orthopaedic Resident, leaves on December 31st, and has his commission as a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Medical Corps. He will report to Carlisle Barracks on January 1st for indoctrination.

The Editor wants to thank Dr. Ralph Rowen, and Bill McFadyen, attendant of the therapeutic pool, for the knives which they donated to the crew of PC 1206. He also wants to thank Miss Eleanor Fox for the two knives which she has sent. For the information of those Alumni who have just started to receive the Record and Chronicle, you will be interested to know that Miss Eleanor Fox after 35 years of faithful service as Operating Room Supervisor retired on March 1, 1943, and Miss Hazel Evans was appointed Operating Room Supervisor.

The Editor also wants to thank Dr. Frank S. Child and Dr. Wilbur S. Stakes for the knives which they have donated. This now makes 16 knives for a crew of 60.

The following announcement has just come to our attention. "Major and Mrs. John Leroy Shippen announce the marriage of their daughter, Mary Elizabeth, to Captain Charles S. Wohl, M.C. on Saturday, October 30th, 1943, Ft. Benning, Ga."

Dr. & Mrs. I. J. Larsen announce the arrival of a baby girl, Greta Louise, weighing 6 lbs. on October 5th in Kohala, Hawaii. Dr. Larsen was a student here from 1937 to 1939.

We have learned that Major Arthur Thibodeau has been made Chief of the Orthopaedic Section of the new Cushing General Hospital, Framingham, Mass. Major Thibodeau was formerly Chief of the Orthopaedic Service at the Lovell General Hospital, Ft. Devens, Mass.

Capt. Kincheloe stopped in for a visit on November 28th and reports that he has been transferred to Carlisle Barracks, Pa., and that John Flanagan has been promoted to Major. The R. & C. wishes to extend its congratulations to Major Flanagan.

Major Peter C. Rizzo stopped in for a visit on November 28th and 29th.

We have learned that Dr. David H. Sluss who was a Surgical Resident in 1926 is now a Lt. Col. and is in Iran. His address is: Lt. Col. David H. Sluss, 0-181893, 113th General Hospital, A.P.O. 680 % Postmaster, New York, N.Y.

We see by the newspapers that Mal Stevens who is a Lt. Comm. has been detached from the Station Hospital, at Sampson, N.Y. The paper states his new duty was not announced.

The Record and Chronicle records with considerable pride the fact that Mr. Andre Pillot, the representative of the Board of Managers to the United Hospital Fund practically singlehanded won second prize of $250.,for The Hospital for Special Surgery by enlisting the second highest number of new subscribers of $5.00 or over to the United Hospital Fund Campaign. It was also through Mr. Pillot's efforts that the hospital won another second prize of $300., for the second highest percentage of increase over the quota for the hospital. We owe Mr. Pillot a debt of gratitude for his fine work and untiring efforts on behalf of The Hospital for Special Surgery.

The last report from Mr. Young, the Assistant Director, is that we have raised to date by the sale of subscriptions to War Bonds $485.25, with 32 precincts, I mean books, to be heard from. The drawing is to be held on December 20th and we sincerely hope that our contribution to the National War Fund will reach well over $500.

As the Christmas holidays approach us and our program unfolds for the Christmas festivities here at the hospital, our thoughts turn more and more to you who are with the Armed Forces. No matter where you are, we hope you too will be celebrating Christmas, and we sincerely hope that the New Year will be a brighter and happier one for all.

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